

The Effect of Explicit Instruction of Compliment Responses Strategies on Intermediate Iranian Foreign Language Learners' Ability to Respond to Compliments

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of explicit instruction of compliment responses strategies on intermediate Iranian EFL learners' ability to respond to compliments appropriately. It also touched on the relationship between explicit instruction and Vygotsy's Zone of Proximal Development. More specifically, the study aimed at exploring the linguistic and pragmatic strategies used by Iranian EFL learners when responding to compliments before and after receiving explicit instruction of compliment responses strategies. Furthermore, the research project investigated the social and cultural norms and values that can affect the formulation of compliment responses strategies. A quasi-experimental, pretest/posttest design was conducted with two groups (experimental and control group) with the total number of 30 English female students at Oil Company Language Institute. The experimental group was exposed to metapragmatic information featuring explicit teaching on compliment responses strategies based on Herbert's taxonomy, followed by communicative practice. The study based its argument on a data elicited by means of an English version of Discourse Completion Test(DCT).The data, collected from a DCT, were categorized

according to the compliment responses strategies in light of Herbert's taxonomy (1989). The data were analyzed focusing on two super categories, Agreement and Non-agreement strategies. The results were examined through a Chi-Square by comparing the experimental and control group's use of compliment responses strategies before and after treatment. The results of the data analysis revealed that explicit instruction had an impressively positive effect on raising students' pragmalinguistic awareness as well as their hindrance of L1 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer to L2(second language).

Keywords: Pragmatic transfer, Explicit instruction, Compliment responses strategies, Intercultural communication, Pragmalinguistic, Sociopragmatic

1. Introduction

With increasing globalization and ever growing interest in communication across borders and between different cultural communities, the need for teaching pragmatics can be felt more and more. Despite this fact, pragmatics has long been a neglected area in foreign language context. The communicative needs of the foreign language learners seem to be overlooked in the Iranian educational system. Many Iranian EFL learners have difficulties at interpersonal level when establishing a conversation with native speakers. This is due to the fact that in foreign language context, learning occurs almost exclusively in classrooms when many teachers share the same L1 and cultural background as their students, and where only a limited range of social interactions is provided. The resulting lack of interactions with native speakers can lead to pragmatic failure and communication breakdown. Thus pragmatics constitutes a fundamental element of language ability for EFL learners.

Sociolinguistic or pragmatic competence has been one of the primary concerns to interlanguage pragmaticists. They tried to determine what makes up such competence, and how it should be developed and put to use in a social setting. These attempts yielded numerous studies of interlanguage speech acts. One of the most frequently addressed questions in these studies is how non-native speakers realize a particular speech act in a given situation and to what extent they differ from native speakers of a target language in performing that speech act (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Based on the above definitions and concerns established by interlanguage pragmaticists, the present study views interlanguage pragmatics as the area of examining speech act of compliment responses among Iranian intermediate students. Moreover, the focus of the present study is on the effect of explicit instruction on developing interlanguage pragmatics.

Our study addressed the following questions:

- 1) Does explicit instruction of compliment responses have any significant effect on Iranian EFL intermediate level students' ability to use Agreement compliment responding strategies?
- 2) Does explicit instruction of cross-cultural differences in terms of Non-Agreement strategies have any significant effect on reducing L1 (first language) pragmatic transfer among Iranian EFL intermediate level students?

2. Background of the Study

2.1 Pragmatic Transfer

According to Kasper (1992), Pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information (p.207). Many researchers have shown that second language learners tend to transfer the sociolinguistic norms of their native language when interacting with native speakers of the target language (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1983; Keshavarz, Eslami, & Ghahreman, 2006; Scarcella, 1979; Schmidt & Richards, 1985). Thus, studies on second language learners' realization of target Language have supported the idea that pragmatic transfer is source of cross-cultural communication

breakdown (Thomas, 1983). According to negative transfer in the recognition of different proper sentences, EFL learners generally either are unable to recognize these patterns or encounter limitations. Implicit teaching of speech acts leaves the learners away from choosing a right and proper reply when encountered with a specific situation. Unluckily, instruction speech act as an agent of socio- cultural skill is not stressed in Iranian English institutes, high schools and universities. Thus, Iranian EFL learners often fail to realize the proper function of speech act in EFL educational situations. The need for applying appropriate teaching methodologies is an integral part of any EFL teaching program.

Transfer of L1 speech act knowledge to the L2 is documented in several other studies (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1983; Keshavarz, Eslami, and Ghahreman, 2006; Scarcella, 1979; Schmidt & Richards, 1985). Ebsworth, Bodman, and Carpenter (1996) found many instances of native language (NL) influence on Non natives (NNSs') greetings in English. Some studies have suggested a tendency for learners to produce a mix of L1 transfer and overgeneralization in the use of an L2 form in inappropriate contexts (Blum-Kulka, 1983; Thomas, 1983).

2.2 Explicit Instruction and Pragmatic Development

According to Kasper and Rose (2001:p.3), there is now a large and fast growing literature on interlanguage pragmatics, that is, learners' use and acquisition of L2 Pragmatic ability (Kasper& Blum- Kulka, 1993; Kasper& Rose, 1999, Rose, 2000). Most of the participants in these studies are foreign language learners due to the fact that EFL contexts provide learners with incomplete input and less opportunity for using L2 outside the classroom. The present study poses the question of whether Iranian learners benefit from explicit instruction in compliment responses in a foreign language contexts. Thus, different studies examining the effect of instruction on pragmatic development have been reviewed in this section.

Research in the last decade has focused on the role of instruction in pragmatic development (for reviews, see Martinez- Flor et al, 2003; Kasper, 2001; Kasper and Rose, 2002), and it has been found that learners who receive instruction on different aspects of pragmatics are at a distinct advantage (Olshtain and Cohen, 1990; Takahasli, 2001; Rose and Ng Kwai-Fun, 2001, Safant, 2005).

Explicit teaching generally involves providing explicit metapragmatic information about L2 rules through explanations (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994; House, 1996; LoCestro, 2001), metacognitive discussions (Olshtain& Cohen, 1990), and corrective feedback (Bouton, 1994 b). There have been a lot of findings that point to an explicit approach as being more conducive to learning. For example, House (1996) found that German learners of English who were given metapragmatic information about the social conditions for the use of L2 routines were superior in realizing a more richly varied and more interpersonally active repertoire of gambits and strategies. Rose and Ng (2001) examined the differential effects of inductive versus deductive teaching on Cantonese-Speaking EFL learners' acquisition of compliment and compliment responses. Their results indicated that only the deductive group showed progress in the use of appropriate compliment responses.

Consistent with this line of research Ghobadi and Fahim (2009), compared the use of explicit and implicit instruction of English “thanking formulas” on Iranian EFL intermediate level students’ socio- pragmatic and pragmalinguistic awareness. The results obtained from the explicit instruction group indicated that instruction group had an impressively positive effect on raising students’ sociopragmatic awareness as well as their hindrance of L1 pragmalinguistic .

Findings of researches conducted on the effect of instruction on pragmatics in SLA indicated positive effect of such efforts (Kasper, 2001). Most of these studies, which employed explicit instruction where learners were provided with explicit metapragmatic information through explanation, description and discussion of speech acts, have lent support to facilitative effort of explicit instruction (Billmyer, 1996; Takahashi, 2001; Rose and Ng Kwai-Fun, 2001; Tateyame, 2001). In other words, it has been concluded that receiving explicit instruction promotes learners ability to express more native- like speech acts.

2.3 Interlanguage pragmatics in the Zone of proximal development

According to Ohta (2001), Vygotsky’s Zone of proximal development (ZPD) has been fruitfully applied in L2 research that examines second and foreign language learning. She examines how Vygotsky Zone of proximal development (ZPD), originally intended to assess the educative potential of children, can be applied to the teaching and learning of interlanguage pragmatics.

Vygotsky’s Zone of proximal development describes how cognitive growth occurs in children. Rather than considering a child’s potential in terms of a static measure such as an IQ score, Vygotsky felt that a developmental measure was needed to better assess children’s educative potential. The ZPD provides a conceptualization of how developmental potential might be understood. Vygotsky (1978, p. 86) defines the ZPD as “The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”.

Assistance in the ZPD may be called scaffolding (Wood et al. 1976), and accomplishments made with assistance may be termed assisted performance (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991). Assistance in the ZPD functions most effectively when it is tailored to the learner, adapted and eventually withdrawn in response to learner development (Lantolf and Alijagafresh, 1996).

Vygotsky’s definition of the ZPD was designed as a way to consider the developmental potential of children. However, in the L2 learning context, many learners are adults and Vygotsky’s definition has been adapted to better suit the adult L2 developmental context (Ohta, 2001 P. 9).

Vygotsky’s theory is considered as sociocultural theory which proposes social interaction as a fundamental aspect in the development of cognition. In Vygotsky’s view, learner doesn’t learn in isolation. Instead learning is strongly influenced by social interactions, which take place in meaningful contexts. The ZPD is a key developmental space for language learning and

acquisition. This theory emphasizes the dynamic nature of the interplay between teachers, learners and tasks, and provides a view of learning as arising from interactions with others. The concept of noticing (Schmidt, 1990), which emphasizes the role of conscious awareness in SLA can be enhanced by a teacher because it is unlikely for students to notice particular L2 features on his or her own. Considering the ZPD, in the early stages, the learner depends on more skilled teachers, who instruct the learner on what to do, what not to do, and how to do it. This other-regulation continues until the learner gains control over strategic mental processes. The scaffolding teaching strategy provides individualized support based on the learner's ZPD (Chang, Sung, & Chen, 2002). In scaffolding instruction a more knowledgeable other provides scaffolds or supports to facilitate the learner's development. The scaffolds facilitate a student's ability to build on prior knowledge and internalize new information. The activities provided in scaffolding instruction are just beyond the level of what the learner can do alone (Olson & Pratt, 2000). The more capable other provides the scaffolds so that the learner can accomplish (with assistance) the tasks that he or she could otherwise not complete, thus helping the learner through the ZPD (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). Learning can be said to take place when transition from other-regulation to self-regulation is accomplished through collaborative, dialogic activity (Lantolf & Appel, 1991).

2.4 The Acquisition of Compliment Responses

Paying appropriate compliments and responding to compliments appropriately are two aspects of communicative competence which may differ in different ways from one culture to another. This study has focused on the extent to which it is possible to teach communicative competence emphasizing on compliment responding strategies.

Research on compliments and compliment responses is traced back to the work of Nessa Wolfson and Joan Manes (Wolfson, 1980; Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Wolfson, 1981a; Manes 1983), who provided the first comprehensive description of formulaicity of compliments in American English. Compliment responses are interesting to study because they reflect sociocultural norms as stated by Herbert (1989). Therefore, studying CRs can "enhance our understanding of a people's culture, social values, social organization, and the function and meaning of language use in a community" (Yuan, 2001, p. 273).

It can be said that the classic frameworks of CRs categorization are those suggested by Pomerantz (1978) and Herbert (1989). An excellent study on compliment responses conducted by Herbert (1989) provides a useful CR categorization which is the starting point for this study. This category includes Agreement and Non-agreement responses (see Appendix 1).

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants taking part in this study were 40 female students studying at Oil Company Language Institute, ranging in age from 25 to 30. Out of these 40 students, 30 of them had successfully completed the previous final exam of the institute and 10 of them had to be excluded from data analyses, since a homogenous group was needed; therefore, the data

analysis came from 30 subjects. For administrative and technical reasons standardized proficiency measures could not be administered to our learners; therefore, rely was made on the results of their previous final exam. The participants made up of two intact classes, taught by the researchers, which were randomly assigned to the two classes. The following classes had been agreed upon by the institute to be accessible for the purpose of this study:

1. Morning Intermediate class, with 15 students (MI1)
2. Evening Intermediate class, with 15 students (EI1)

3.2 Design

The research design (quasi-experimental) consisted of one experimental group and one control group. The 15 students taking part in the morning class served as the experimental group and 15 students in the evening class served as the control group. All the students were Oil Company employees, so they shared basic demographic characteristics, such as, field of study, job, and age.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

A Discourse Completion Test (DCT) was employed as the main procedure to collect the data in the present study. To put it simply, the data of the present study were elicited via questionnaires. Although based on the results of the previous final exam, it could be estimated that most of the subjects in each class were homogenous, in order to eliminate the pre-existing differences in the two groups and the homogeneity of them and minimize threats to internal and external validities the study a pre-test (DCT) was administered at the beginning of the study (see Appendix 2).

The DCT used in this study was borrowed from the M.A thesis conducted by Si-Yuan Wu in Taiwan University (2005). It consisted of 10 situational descriptions designed to elicit students' responses regarding responding to compliments strategies. It was piloted prior to use and alpha Cronbach method was applied to guarantee its reliability. Reliability indexes (0.84) revealed that the test was acceptable for the purpose of the study. Because the instruction on compliment responses was not intended to include any information on how the realization of this speech act might be affected by gender and social variable, these variables were controlled as far as possible in this study. All the participants were female and most of the compliment responses situations in DCT occurred more frequently among people with equal social status.

3.4 Materials and Procedures

The experimental group received metapragmatic instruction on responding to compliments based on the formulas proposed by Herbert (1989), and were also provided with cultural and pragmalinguistic information through some authentic conversations enriched with compliment response strategies. At the same time the control group was presented with the same conversations but this time without being provided with metapragmatic instruction by the instructor.

The experimental group received 15-session explicit metapragmatic instruction or treatment based on Herbert (1989) classifications of compliment responses (see Appendix A). It should be mentioned that pragmatic instruction took about 30 minutes of each 2 hour class period because the course instructor had their own course teaching material to follow as well. The course teaching material for both groups was 4 first units of Interchange 2 by Jack C. Richards (2001).

Materials provided for the experimental group including authentic conversations related to compliment response strategies used by native speakers. They were extracted from the dissertation conducted by Nor Suharti binit Abdul Karim (2011).

The explicit metapragmatic instructional activities included description, explanation, teacher-fronted discussion, small-group discussions, role plays, pragmatically focused tasks, and feedback.

3.5 The Coding and Interrater Reliability

In this study the responses were categorized in to: Agreement and Non-agreement. Each category has a few subcategories. Agreement includes: Appreciation token (AT), Comment acceptance (CA), Comment history (CH), Praise upgrade (PU), Reassignment and Return. Non-agreement includes: Scale down, Question, Disagreement, Qualification, and silence plus acknowledgement.

The coding of the data was carried out by the researchers in light of the objectives and the data analysis framework of the study. Each response was examined, coded and grouped according to the features observed. In order to determine the reliability of coding and validity of the findings, three independent raters were selected to analyze random samples; two Iranian native speakers and one American native speaker. All were graduate students majoring in English Language teaching. Results showed that even though raters reached a high level of consistency (91%) in classifying the data, there were discrepancies on how to categorize certain responses. Therefore, a 2 hour discussion session was provided to consider those responses that differed. This increased the consistency and consensus among raters and raised their level of agreement to 95%.

4. Data Analysis and Results

To analyze the data, the number of complimenting strategies which was used by the participants in the experimental and the control group was counted before and after the treatment. As the data obtained for the present study were nominal and categorical and hence, did not meet parametric assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance, using SPSS version 20, a non-parametric Chi-Square was employed to compare the responses across 10 situations. The significance of difference in frequency counts was determined through Chi-square analysis ($\alpha=0/05$). The frequency, percentages for the experimental and the control group's use of complimenting strategies were also compared before and after the treatment.

4.1 Pretesting Agreement Compliment Response Strategies

Table 1. Frequencies and Percentages of Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (pre-test)

		ACRS						Total
		Appreciation token	Comment acceptance	Praise upgrade	Re-assignment	Return	Comment History	
EXPERIMENTAL	Count	13	9	5	8	18	5	58
	% within GROUP	22.4%	15.5%	8.6%	13.8%	31.0%	8.6%	48.7%
CONTROL	Count	14	11	6	7	15	8	61
	% within GROUP	23.0%	18.0%	9.8%	11.5%	24.6%	13.1%	51.3%
Total	Count	27	20	11	15	33	13	119

An analysis of chi-square was run to probe that there were not any significant differences between the experimental and control groups' ability to use agreement compliment responding strategies before administering explicit instruction of compliment responses to the former group. Table 1 displays the frequencies, percentages for the experimental and control groups' use of agreement compliment responding strategies.

Table 2. Chi-Square Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (pre-test)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.285 ^a	5	.936
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.36.			

The non-significant chi-square value of 1.28 ($P = .936 > .05$) supports the above conclusions. Thus it can be concluded that there were not any significant differences between the experimental and control groups' use of agreement compliment responding strategies during the pre-testing phase. The small differences between the heights of the frequencies of the two groups indicate non-significant differences between their uses of agreement compliment responding strategies before instruction.

4.1.1 Post-testing Agreement Compliment Response Strategies

Table 3. Frequencies and Percentages of Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (Pos-test)

		ACRS						Total
		Appreciation token	Comment acceptance	Praise upgrade	Re-assignment	Return	Comment History	
EXPERIMENTAL	Count	13	9	5	8	18	5	58
	% within GROUP	22.4%	15.5%	8.6%	13.8%	31.0%	8.6%	48.7%
CONTROL	Count	14	11	6	7	15	8	61
	% within GROUP	23.0%	18.0%	9.8%	11.5%	24.6%	13.1%	51.3%
Total	Count	27	20	11	15	33	13	119
	% within GROUP	22.7%	16.8%	9.2%	12.6%	27.7%	10.9%	100.0%

As table 3 shows, the sum total percentage of the agreement strategies used by the experimental group after receiving the treatment is 63.2% and for the control group is 36.8%.The result revealed that the percentage of agreement CR strategies increased from 48.7% to 63%for the experimental group after receiving the treatment. The marked increase in the use of agreement strategies regarding the experimental group, with no similar increase for the control group, indicates that instruction had a positive effect.

Table 4. Chi-Square Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (Post-test)

TIME		value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
POSTTEST	Pearson Chi-Square	11.777 ^b	5	.038

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 6.99.

The significant chi-square value of 10.77 ($P = .038 < .05$) supports the above conclusions.

4.2 Pre-Testing Non-Agreement Compliment Response Strategies

Table 5. Frequencies and Percentages of Non-Agreement Compliment Response Strategies by Groups (Pre-test)

		NAS			Total
		Scale down	Question	Disagreement	
EXPERIMENTAL	Count	64	5	23	92
	% within GROUP	69.6%	5.4%	25.0%	50.5%
CONTROL	Count	54	6	30	90
	% within GROUP	60.0%	6.7%	33.3%	49.5%
Total	Count	118	11	53	182
	% within GROUP	64.8%	6.0%	29.1%	100.0%

An analysis of chi-square was run to compare the experimental and control groups' use of non-agreement compliment response strategies on the pre-testing phase in order to compare their pragmatic awareness in terms of non-agreement strategies before administering the explicit instructions of cross-cultural differences to the experimental group. As displayed in Table 5, the total percentage of the non-agreement strategies for the experimental group is 50% and for the control group is 49.5%; the result revealed that the participants in each group acted similarly.

Table 6. Chi-Square of Non-Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (Pre-test)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	1.841 ^a	2	.398
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 5.44.			

The chi-square observed value of 1.84 ($P = .398 > .05$) indicates that there were not any significant differences between the experimental and control groups' uses of the non-agreement compliment responses strategies during the pretesting phase.

4.2.1 Post-testing Non-Agreement Compliment Response Strategies

Table 7. Frequencies and Percentages of Non-Agreement Compliment Response Strategies by Groups (Post-test)

		NAS				Total
		Scale down	Question	Disagreement	Qualification	
EXPERIMENTAL	Count	29	9	6	7	51
	% within GROUP	56.9%	17.6%	11.8%	13.7%	35.7%
CONTROL	Count	46	8	34	4	92
	% within GROUP	50.0%	8.7%	37.0%	4.3%	64.3%
Total	Count	75	17	40	11	143
	% within GROUP	52.4%	11.9%	28.0%	7.7%	100.0%

An overall analysis of the use of non-agreement CR strategies by the experimental group revealed that Non-agreement strategies were used significantly less frequently compared to the control group's use of these strategies after the treatment.

Table 8. Chi-Square Non-Agreement Compliment Responding Strategies by Groups (Post-test)

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.701 ^a	3	.003
a. 1 cells (12.5%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 3.92.			

The chi-square observed value of 13.70 ($P = .003 < .05$) indicates that the abovementioned differences are statistically significant. An overall analysis of the use of non-agreement CR strategies by the experimental group revealed that Non-agreement strategies were used significantly less frequently compared to the control group's use of this strategy after the treatment.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to answer two questions. The first question concerned whether explicit instruction of compliment responses have any significant effect on Iranian EFL intermediate level students' ability to use Agreement compliment responding strategies. The second concerned whether explicit instruction of cross-cultural differences in terms of Non-Agreement strategies have any significant effect on reducing L1 (first language) pragmatic transfer among Iranian EFL intermediate level students.

The answer to the first question seems to be positive. It appears that results from the DCT offered some evidence that instruction was effective. Particularly, the increase in the use of

Herbert's (1989) six agreement compliment formulas- the main content of instruction- by the experimental group with no similar increase for the control group, indicates that explicit instruction has a positive effect on learners' ability to use agreement strategies when they respond to compliments.

This is in line with previous studies that report the benefits of explicit instruction for L2 pragmatic development (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton 1994; Rose and Ng kwai- fun, 2001; Safont, 2003, 2001, 2005; Takahashi, 2001). More specifically, findings with regard to the first research question in this study lend further support to those studies on the positive effect of explicit instruction which employed explanation and discussion of rules as their approach to provide learners with metapragmatic information (Kubota, 1995; Locastro, 1997; Trosborg 2003; Yashimi 2001, Wishnoff, 2000).

The results of this study also show the importance and power of a teacher's expertise in a classroom setting. A teacher's lecture can serve as a scaffold upon which learners can construct new knowledge, functioning as assistance in the ZPD. This is also in line with Virginia Samuda's (2001) study that looks at how teacher intervention impacted learners as they worked with a task involving expression of probability and possibility in English.

The answer to the second question is positive in that the subjects in the experimental group used less non-agreement strategies in their tests than did those in the control group.

Consistent with the results of the present study, Sharifian (2005) notes that the Persian schema encourages speakers who receive a compliment to downgrade it by attributing it to the speaker's talent, which was interpreted as inappropriate by the interlocutors who were academics in Australian university. Sharifian explained that when the compliment can not be attributed to the interlocutor, there is a tendency to praise or enhance the 'face' of another party who may be responsible for success, for example, family members or employers, and he proposed that this highlights the Persian value of self in relation to others. This is quite similar to the findings of this study indicating a tendency of Iranian EFL learners to reject rather than accept compliments before administering metapragmatic instruction of compliment responses strategies.

Chen's (1993) findings of the American CR are comparable to Holme's (1986) findings of the New Zealand English speakers' compliment responses. His strategies 1. Acceptance and 2. Returning together (58%) roughly equals to Holmers' Acceptance type, which makes up 61% of responses. In the same line, Chen finds that most of the Chinese compliment responses belong to the category Rejection (96%), which includes sub-categories of Disagreeing and Denigrating (51%), Expressing embarrassment (26%) and Explaining (19%). He further suggests that the primary consideration (P. 65) for American English speakers when they respond to compliment is Leech's (1983) Agreement Maxim: minimize disagreements between self and others and maximize agreement between self and others. The overriding motivation' (P.65) of the Chinese compliment responses, on the other hand, can be explained by Leech's (1983) Modesty Maxim: Minimize praise of self and maximize dispraise of self. The present study aims to extend the research in this cross-cultural area a

step further by attempting to explore the effect of explicit instruction on making Iranian EFL learners aware of cross-cultural differences in responding to compliments.

In sum, the EFL learners' pragmatic knowledge in EFL contexts does not automatically increase with the increase of their grammatical knowledge. It is thus necessary to investigate pragmatic transfer and provide students with knowledge of this phenomenon in order to prevent them from experiencing its possible pragmatic transfer. Making contextualized pragmatically appropriate language input available to learners in an EFL context in which they don't have the chance to encounter this input outside the classroom is pedagogically necessary and politically right. Consequently, materials should be developed in order to teach students the patterns, rules, strategies, and linguistic forms by means of which the important speech acts are interpreted and realized in different contexts. It is necessary, therefore for textbooks and teaching syllabuses to reflect the constantly widening scope of sociocultural research related to speech acts.

6. Limitation of the Study

There are a number of potential problems with this study that require caution in making claims of any kind. First, the number of participants was fairly small representing that full-scale result cannot be generalized from the study. Thus, the number of participants can be expanded in the future study. Secondly, due to the limitations of the institute, the participants of the present study were female students. Since gender was not taken in to account in this study. To put it in another way, this variable is controlled in this study. This problem limits the generalizability of findings based on this sample, but since we mostly focused in our discussion on the effect of explicit teaching on the EFL learners' ability to respond to compliments appropriately, this limitation should have little impact. Thirdly as mentioned above, this study aimed at revealing the effect of explicit instruction on the speech act of compliment responses, the gender and differences between compliment- receivers' social distance were excluded in this study. Most of the compliment responses situations in DCT occurred more frequently among people with equal social status. Thus, the result cannot be generalized from this study regarding the issue of compliment- receivers' social distance. Fourthly, another problem with the research was the nature of data collected. In a detailed way, natural data were not involved; hence, the elicited data alone might have not entirely absorbed the learner's ability to carry out this speech act in authentic situations. Finally, the situation of topic of the compliment may get involved in the complimentee's response. Even though each situation was given detailed description, the complimentee might once in a while get perplexed at it and offered some unsatisfactory responses. Furthermore, now that the situation of every compliment needs the complimentee's visualization, we were unable to make sure that every complimentee had the similar or even identical response to the compliment if the compliment were given in the real life.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. Herber's Compliment Responses Framework (1986, 1989)

Agreement

I. Acceptances

Appreciation Token (*Thanks/Thank you/(smile)*)

Comment Acceptance (*Thanks, it 's my favorite, too*)

Praise Upgrade (*Really brings out the blue in my eyes, doesn 't it?*)

II. Comment History (*I bought it for the trip to Arizona*)

III. Transfers

Shift credit/Reassignment (*My brother gave it to me*)

Return (*So 's yours*)

B. Nonagreement

I. Scale Down/Downgrade (*It 's really quite old*)

II. Questioning (*Do you really think so?*)

III. Nonacceptances

Disagreement (*I hate it*)

Qualification (*It's all right, but Len's nicer.*)

IV. No acknowledgement (*silence*)

Appreciation Token: which is a verbal and nonverbal acceptance of the compliment, which acceptance is not tied to the specific semantics of the stimulus.

(ii) **Comment Acceptance:** in which a single speaker accepts the complimentary force and offers a relevant comment on the appreciated topic.

(iii) **Praise Upgrade:** in which the speaker accepts the compliment and asserts that the complimentary force is insufficient.

(iv) **Comment History:** in which a speaker offers a comment (or a series of comment) on the object complimented; these comments differ from (ii) above in that the latter are impersonal; i.e. they shift the force of compliment from the speaker.

(v) **Reassignment:** in which the speaker agrees with the compliment assertion, which is transferred to some third person or to the object itself.

(vi) **Return:** in which the praise is shifted or returned to the first speaker.

(vii) **Scale Down:** in which the speaker disagrees with the complimentary force, pointing to some flaw in the object or claiming that the praise is overstated

(viii) **Questioning:** in which the speaker questions the sincerity or the appropriateness of the compliment.

(ix) **Disagreement:** In which the speaker asserts that the object complimented is not worthy of praise; the first speaker's assertion is in error

(x) **Qualification:** in which the speaker merely qualifies the original assertion, usually with though, but, well, etc. (like disagreement but weaker)

(xi) **No Response/No Acknowledgement:** in which the speaker gives no indication of having heard the compliment, either responding with an irrelevant comment (topic shift) or no response at all.

Appendix 2. Questionnaire (in English)

Personal information

Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

Age: -----

School: ----- Grader: -----

First of all, thank you very much for spending your valuable time filling out this questionnaire. There are totally ten questions in this questionnaire and all questions include several different situations in which you are likely to meet in your daily life. When you respond to each of the question, please imagine you are talking with a “real person, and thus please use the most natural way to write down your responses. Please answer all the questions and provide enough and relevant response to every question. Thanks for your cooperation again.

Situation 1 (hair style)

You recently changed a new hairstyle. On your way house, you meet a friend of yours, and she says, “This hairstyle makes you look great. It makes you look younger!”

Situation 2 (smart clothing)

When you take part in your friend’s birthday party, one of your friends says to you,
“Your clothing is much more beautiful than others. How much this clothing suits you?”

Situation 3 (beautiful eyes)

One of your friends tells you “Wow, your eyes are so charming.”

Situation 4 (Figure)

During the interval of classes, you and your classmate are talking about the topic concerning 'lose weight'. In the course discussion, one of your classmates tell you,

"How can maintain such a standard figure. If could have the same figure as you, how wonderful it would be."

Situation 5 (Interpersonal skill)

Recently you have finished an extracurricular activity in your class. One of your classmate, who also cooprated do finish this activity, says to you "Had it not been for your help, our activity would not have been successfully accomplished. It is your nice personality that helps avoid possible disagreements with others.")

Situation 6 (Brand new cell phone)

You recently bought a brand new cell phone. Your friend who also wants to change a new one, talk to you, Wow, it is so smashing and its color also looks very splendid. You have good taste in choosing cell phone."

Situation 7 (MP3 Player)

You recently bought a new MP3 player. During the lunchtime, when you want to take it out to listen to some music, one of your classmates says, "Wow, your MP3 player is the last style. Its style and functions are much better than others. You have an excellent appreciation of electronic products."

Situation 8 (Computer ability)

After asking for advice about computer, your friend (or classmate) says, "you are a computer talent. Your computer ability is much better than others."

Situation 9 (Sports)

Today, you had several tests in the physical education. After all the tests, your classmate says, "you are so excellent. You successfully and easily pass all the tests."

Situation 10 (English ability)

After English classes, your English teacher tells you. “Recently your English has made great progress and always has some outstanding performance. You should keep on doing so.”